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It's 2 to 1 for Johnson On Viet News Panel

President Johnson, whose recent relations with the press have been less than cordial, received some kind words from two Washington correspondents last night.

But a third newsman, Alex Campbell, managing editor of The New Republic, tossed a few pointed barbs at the President's Vietnamese policy.

Campbell joined Stewart Alsop, Washington editor of the Saturday Evening Post, and Hugh Sidey, White House correspondent for Time magazine, in a panel discussion on Vietnam as the American Society of Magazine Publishers began a three-day conference here.

Sidey, speaking to about 150 magazine representatives at the Washington Hilton Hotel, classified Johnson as "a dove, a man who would like to deal in peace" rather than war. But, Sidey said, Johnson is convinced that a lack of strength or a hesitation by the U.S. would lead to war, not to peace.

"Johnson does not enjoy military matters," said Sidey, "and has given indications in private that he distrusts the generals and is wary of them."

Alsop said the President had

been under heavy pressure from his top military advisers to bomb oil depots in Hanoi and Haiphong.

"This pressure will grow as the elections come closer,"

Alsop said. "But the President's instinct is to pull back, not get too involved. The logic of the events has forced him into the war. He has had no alternative but to do what he has."

Campbell disagreed. "There is a contradiction in Johnson's logic. If the goal is to halt North Vietnamese aggression and that has been the justification for this war, then logic dictates that we should be bombing the north with everything we have."

"But I do not believe this is a war of aggression," Campbell said. "It is primarily a civil war, and the Vietcong are probably the real nationalists. We should have never gotten into the war."

Campbell, who just returned from a tour of Southeast Asia, reported that he found a total lack of involvement by nations there in the Vietnamese war. "They feel it is a small, colonialist war. They do not feel there is a threat of general aggression by Red China."